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# LEARNING WITH FARMERS AND TRADERS IN MOZAMBIQUE

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As part of an experience capitalization process, a simple questionnaire or a set of templates can help collect and organise information, and prepare a short document. But even more important is to ensure that the beneficiaries of a project actively join the process. These have been the two main elements of the new experience capitalization initiatives starting in Mozambique.

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With a total budget of approximately €38 million, the Rural Markets Promotion Programme (PROMER) is implemented jointly by the Government of Mozambique and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). It works to increase the incomes of small-scale farmers by helping them market their surpluses more profitably. The programme started in April 2009, and had different components focusing on the need to develop more dynamic market intermediaries; the creation of enterprise-led value chain initiatives; improving the market environment; and the necessary policy and institutional support.

In 2017, project representatives were selected to participate in two seminars organised by CTA in Maputo, joining staff members of other IFAD-supported projects in Mozambique and also in Brazil. The workshops were organised to introduce the experience capitalization approach, and to explain how to prepare a set of articles that would help share information about these different initiatives and about the results of the programme.

I was one of the project team members invited to join the CTA experience capitalization training sessions. This was a relatively new subject, but already during the first meeting I started to think how to replicate what we were doing, and how to use the various strategies we were discussing to describe and analyse

our work at PROMER. We were recommended to use templates with a few key questions, and I immediately saw that this is an instrument that can help identify a specific experience, and describe it in detail. Similar templates helped us identify the factors behind the results seen in the field, as part of a broader analysis, and also a set of lessons and recommendations. The use of templates or tables to identify the positive and negative aspects of a project is an attribute that differentiates this approach from others we had used before.

The use of these tools helped us prepare articles that were consistent, analytical and informative. During the second training session we wrote articles about the experiences that we identified in our projects and regions, all of which have now been published by CTA as a collection of case studies written in Portuguese: “Capitalization of Experiences: Lessons for Rural Development in Mozambique and Brazil”. Convinced of the benefits of the approach, after this workshop I organised a similar workshop with my colleagues from one of the PROMER implementation units (where I work as agribusiness officer and coordinator of one of the 3 programme implementation units). In total, 18 persons from different backgrounds attended the experience capitalization training process that I facilitated.

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*Cover “Presenting the experience capitalization methodology to my colleagues, I argued in favour of it being added to the M&E and the KM group of activities in our project”*



The idea of running a new training workshop was to make my colleagues aware of and interested in the experience capitalization approach, and to show the purpose of the tables we had been taught to use. I wanted to share what we had learnt about the analysis with them all, and also show how to structure a report.

### ***Institutionalising capitalization***

We were required to develop success stories as part of the experience capitalization process we started with CTA, but this is also one of the things we do as part of the implementation of all PROMER activities. To help my colleagues with the production of these documents, I encouraged them to use the same set of tables I had used to organise the information available and prepare a short document in Maputo. However, using these tables and elaborating the texts was not enough to comply with the essence of the approach: the experience capitalization methodology is meant to be participatory. To address this problem, there was a need to re-design some of the activities which were planned as part of the PROMER programme in the course of 2018 and accommodate some structural changes.

All staff members of the programme-implementing units were invited to join a planning session at the end of 2018 where the PROMER's National

Coordination Unit encouraged us to identify those parts of our programme that could be documented and shared with beneficiaries, partners and district governments as part of the phase-out plan of the programme. At this event, I made a short presentation of the experience capitalization methodology to my fellow colleagues and discussed it with the programme management unit, arguing in favour of it being added to the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and the knowledge management (KM) group of activities. My suggestion was approved at the meeting.

Once the plan was approved, the next step I took was to suggest to those involved in the implementation of all activities in the field, including all service providers, to focus on the lessons identified during the project's exchange visits conducted in the past. Exchange visits have been a common practice in our programme and have often seen beneficiaries and implementing staff actively interacting with one another. I saw this would help meet our objectives regarding the participation of all stakeholders – by involving technicians, producers and rural traders.

### ***Achievements***

Two experience capitalization processes were planned and completed. The first was with a farmers group from the district of Alto-Molocué (in the province of Zambézia, in the northern part of the country), which looked in detail at the work of another farmers' organisation in the district of Ribaué. The farmers in Ribaué had been practising fish farming in addition to agricultural production to diversify their sources of income and food security. Following the capitalization approach, the farmers in Alto-Molocué showed that they were able to replicate the results obtained by the Ribaué district farmers' organisation, and they were able to identify the key factors that helped them do this.

The second capitalization process involved rural traders and district government officials representing



*Right Participants at the seminars organised by CTA in Maputo came from Mozambique and from Brazil*

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four districts in the provinces of Nampula and Zambézia. The participants joined an exchange visit with an association of rural traders in Milanje, another district in Zambézia. This association had been trying out different commercialization strategies, such as linking up with small farmers to buy their crops, establishing communication mechanisms with the local government agencies to access financial services and other business support extension services, and organising the crop marketing process in close collaboration with the local authorities. With the support of the project staff, the visiting traders and government members looked at the possibility of adopting and implementing similar strategies in the context of their own needs.

Completing an experience capitalization process, these individual traders learnt that they could organise themselves as an association, and work together to overcome the challenges they faced. Such challenges included the need of small farmers to aggregate their crops for selling, marketing intermediation and the need to draft and sign contracts. They also decided to dialogue with the government and to discuss the difficulties and opportunities they identified.

### ***Planning the way forward***

With these positive results, and with the continuous need to prepare and share success stories within PROMER, we can say that positive steps have been taken to institutionalise the experience capitalization approach, and new processes are planned to be conducted systematically by the M&E staff. Follow-ups sessions by the management team will help ensure the use of the acquired knowledge by all participants.

The experience capitalization process allows for the generation of knowledge coming from rural development interventions. The approach also encourages the involvement of different target groups in the monitoring and evaluation processes of all development activities. The participation of project beneficiaries is particularly useful.



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